HINCKLEY KNITTING MILLS 21-35 East Wister Street Philadelphia Philadelphia County Pennsylvania HAER No. PA-212

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#### **PHOTOGRAPHS**

WRITTEN HISTORIC AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD MID-ATLANTIC REGION, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19106

HAER PA 51-PHILA, 708-

### HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD Hinckley Knitting Mills

HAER No. PA-212

### Location:

21-35 East Wister Street (also occupying a portion of the block north toward Collom Street), Philadelphia, Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania.

#### Present Owner:

Greater Germantown Housing Development Corporation.

#### Present Use:

Vacant.

### Significance:

The Hinckley Knitting Mills represented the historical development of the textile industry in Germantown, which was a nationally significant center of textile production in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Started in 1840 by the son of an immigrant English weaver with two knitting machines, the Hinckley Knitting Mills became the largest textile operation in Germantown by 1850 and in Philadelphia by 1860. The mill complex, one of the earliest textile operations in Germantown, was noted for its hosiery and fancy knits.

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### Project Information:

The Hinckley Knitting Mill complex (now a part of the Germantown Dye Works complex) along with a vacant lot located at the northeast corner of Germantown and Wister Streets are scheduled for a three-phase project involving the construction of a commercial center, housing for the elderly and affordable town houses. The existing industrial complex structures will be demolished and all construction will be new. Developed by the Greater Germantown Housing Development Corporation, a non-profit organization, the commercial center will be called Freedom Square and the housing for the elderly called Elders Place. Elders Place will occupy the Hinckley Knitting Mill site.

Martin Abbott Todd Cleveland Kise Franks & Straw 219 North Broad Street Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Sara Jane Elk Philadelphia Historical Commission City of Philadelphia Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

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Philadelphia has long been identified as the nineteenth-century center of textile manufacturing, in which the Hinckley Knitting Mills played an important roll. The textile industry was comprised of various facets, including: knit goods, hosiery, carpets, worsted goods, cotton, woolens, silk, dyeing, and upholstery. The center of Philadelphia's carly textile industry was within a region of the city known as Germantown. Germantown's textile reputation began in the 1830s and was directly linked to the transatlantic migration of English weavers, principally from the districts of Nothingham and Leicester. This migration continued for a half-century, enhancing Germantown's reputation as well as transforming the pre-revolutionary village into an important industrial center. In one particular decade, the 1870s, the population of Germantown increased 43 percent. This dramatic increase was the result of both suburban development and the growth of the textile industry - in 1880, over 3,000 persons were employed in 56 establishments.

Approximately half of the parcel dedicated to the proposed Freedom Square/Elders Place development was once the site of two separate textile establishments. Hinckley Knitting Mills, established in 1840 by Aaron Jones, prospered for a half-century as one of the more successful textile firms in Germantown, specializing in hosiery and fancy knit goods. Its buildings were later absorbed into the Daniel F. Waters Germantown Dye Works, located adjacent to the Hinckley Mills to the east. Founded in 1863 by William Mills, the Dye Works lasted well into the twentieth century. Only two of the Hinckley Knitting Mills' structures remain from the knitting mills' early era, a stable and a warehouse.

Aaron Jones, the founder of the Hinckley Mills, was born in Peckleton, Leicestershire, England in 1807. At the age of 25, he left England for Germantown, to join his father, a weaver who had migrated a few years earlier and to establish a hosiery shop. His father was among the earliest English weavers in Germantown to start a business, and Aaron initially worked in the shop. Soon, Aaron became responsible for sales, traveling the state to find customers. In 1834, Aaron's father sold his machinery to Thomas Fisher, proprietor of the Wakefield Mills, Fisher's Hollow, Germantown, under the arrangement that he would superintend the mills. But when the elder Jones died, Aaron stepped into his place and became manager of the Wakefield Mills.

Aaron held this position for six years, expanding the capacity and production of Wakefield, which was one of the few incorporated mills in antebellum Pennsylvania. In 1840, Jones started his own enterprise, with two knitting machines, in a small mill with an adjacent house. In 1841, Aaron Jones purchased a parcel from the Columbia Fire Engine and Hose Company of Germantown, expanding his property. This would be the eventual site of his hosiery and fancy knit goods establishment. By 1850, Aaron Jones employed a workforce of 265, with a capital of \$7,000.\frac{1}{2} These figures far exceed comparable Germantown

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hosiers in 1850; the closest competitor employed 27 with a capital of \$3,000. However, Jones' business was based on outwork contracts, particularly handloom, whereby a weaver would contract with Jones for work. City-wide, in 1850, Hinckley Knitting Mills had the fourth largest workforce among textile firms. However, a large workforce did not necessarily ensure long-time prosperity; by the advent of the Civil War, Hinckley's larger competitors were out of business.

Between 1850 and 1860, steam replaced hand-powered looms at Jones' mill. Prior to the introduction of steam, Jones, as an outwork contractor, did not require a large complex to house his workforce, since a large majority of the total output was done by the weaver at home. As a result of the installation of state of the art machinery, the workforce of the Hinckley Knitting Mills had shrunk to 65 by 1860 but the capital had risen to \$25,000.2 Jones' firm matured under the steam transformation, outproducing the handworkers of the past. The transformation to steam manifested itself in the physical composition of the mills; buildings were soon erected to house the latest machinery as well as the various components of the new, centralized process.

The Civil War abetted the Germantown hosiery industry, which supplied the troops with blankets, tents, uniforms, etc. Hinckley Knitting Mills bid successfully and garnered large orders, particularly distinguishing itself among Philadelphia firms by netting an order for 165,000 pairs of woolen stockings to the New York depot,<sup>3</sup> one of the three principal supply stations for the Union troops. In 1866, Aaron Jones, Sr., admitted his three sons, Thomas, Aaron, Jr., and John E. Jones, into partnership with him. The establishment prospered with the younger generation running the business; in 1876, the value of goods manufactured was estimated at \$300,000 per annum.<sup>4</sup> Hinckley's workforce burgeoned during this period as well, employing 250 in 1879.<sup>5</sup> Because the parcels that comprised the Hinckley Knitting Mills were bought under Aaron's wife's name, when she died in 1879, the property title was transferred to Aaron's three sons.

In September 1897, the Hinckley Knitting Mills passed from the Joneses to Johnathan M. Schwehm, who dealt in hair cloth and upholstery. The 1900 listing in the City Directory for this site is "Jno. M. Schwehm & Sons (Jno. M., Harry J., Ernest)." When the elder Schwehm died in 1917, the sons inherited the business. The Schwehms sold the parcel in 1958, ending 61 years of ownership. No substantive information was found concerning this establishment during the Schwehm period. In 1959, the parcel and factory buildings were sold to D. F. Waters and Sons and the Hinckley Mills was incorporated into the adjacent Germantown Dye Works, owned and operated by the Waters.

It seems that the mill also provided worker housing adjacent to the factory on Collom Street. These three-story brick rowhouses appear on the 1879 and 1881 Hexamer insurance maps, but are no longer part of the mill property. Most of the mill complex, including the four-story, 186 foot-long mill building, the dye houses, press stop, engine room, offices, and other ancilliary buildings were demolished in the 1950s. Only the three-story warehouse and two-story stable remain from the

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mill's period of significance from 1840 to 1897 under Joneses proprietorship. The evolution of the Hinckley Knitting Mills has been cited by historian Philip Scranton, as representative of the establishment and growth of a Germantown textile business.<sup>6</sup>

#### Footnotes

- 1. Philip Scranton, <u>Proprietary Capitalism</u>, <u>The Textile Manufacture at Philadelphia</u>, <u>1800-1885</u> (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 181.
- 2. Ibid., 231.
- 3. Ibid., 286.
- 4. Daniel Robson, editor, <u>Manufactures and Manufacturers of Pennsylvania of the Nineteenth Century</u> (Philadelphia: Galaxy Publishing Company, 1875), 316.
- 5. E. Hexamer, Map of Hinckley Knitting Mills, Aaron Jones' Sons (Philadelphia, 1879).
- 6. Scranton, 233.
- 7. Lorin Blodget, Census of Manufactures of Philadelphia, 1883 (Philadelphia, Dickson & Gilling, 1883), 88.
- 8. Deed Book TG.257:281. Philadelphia Recorder of Deeds.
- 9. Deed Book WMG.56:33. Philadelphia Recorder of Deeds.
- 10. Obituary, "The Philadelphia Inquirer" (October 12, 1953).

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### Chain of Title - Hinckley Knltting Mllls

April 3, 1733 Cunrad Cunrads, husbandman, executor of Mathias Cunrads

to John Jansen, weaver.

Seven acres.

Deed Book G.2:536.

April 23, 1734 John Jansen, weaver, to Jacob Weiss, brass button maker.

Seven acres.

Deed Book G.2:534.

June 3, 1765 Joseph Whitehouse, mason and John Weiss, practitioner in

"Physick and Surgery" (son and heir of Jacob Weiss,

brazier) to Joseph Swift, merchant. Six acres, 138 square perches.

Deed Book G.532.

March 2, 1795 Joseph Swift, merchant to George Dannehower, miller.

Three acres.

Deed Book EF.14:179.

March 18, 1799 George Dannehower and Charles Dannehower, millers, to

Frederick Warner, harness maker.

\$529.52.

Deed Book D.74:319.

June 20, 1811 Margaret Warner, executor of Frederick Warner, to Adam

Keppel, baker.

\$240.

Deed Book GHF.19:387.

March 1822 Dorothy Keppel, executor of Adam Keppel, to Johnathon

Wentz, miller. \$1,546.78

Deed Book GH.3:158.

April 1837 Henry Scheetz, executor of Johnathon Wentz, to Charles M.

Pastorius.

\$906.

Deed Book GHF.13:332.

December 1837 Charles M. Pastorius and John M. Bockius to John Jacob

Straub, baker.

### HINCKLEY KNITTING MILLS HAER No. PA-212 (Page 7)

\$1,200.

Deed Book GHF.13:332.

September 1941

John Jacob Straub, baker, to Jacob Kaupp

Deed Book KLL.24:691.

May 2, 1864

Jacob Kaupp to Elizabeth Jones (wife of Aaron).

Deed Book LRB.24:554.

The deed search revealed numerous properties, that became part of the Hinckley Knitting Mills, being processed to Elizabeth Jones, wife of Aaron Jones. Another is:

March 10, 1863

Christian Esau to John Jacob Straub.

Deed Book ABH.82:346

April 21, 1864

John Jacob Straub to Elizabeth Jones.

Deed Book LRB.24:432.

One of the few places where Aaron Jones is listed as the purchaser, in place of Elizabeth, is very early in his proprietorship:

May 8, 1841

Columbia Fire Engine and Hose Company of Germantown

to Aaron Jones.

Deed Book JAH.141:551.

The various parcels gathered by the Joneses over the years are summed up in Deed Book LW.10:338, dated February 10, 1879 - "Aaron Jones, et al, executors, etc. to Thomas Jones, et al". Continuing:

September 1, 1897

Thomas Jones, et ux, et al to John M. Schwehm.

\$ 50,000.

Deed Book WMG.197:393.

John M. Schwehm died on January 10, 1917 and transferred the proprietorship of the Hinckley Knitting Mills to his two sons, Harry and Ernest.

February 13, 1958

Ernest Schwehm to Jack and Natalie Lessey.

Deed Book CAB.753:310.

July 2, 1959

Jack and Natalie Lessey to Daniel F. Waters and Sons.

Deed Book CAB.1112:585.

June 26, 1981

D. F. Waters & Sons, Inc. to Gene Minnick.

Deed Book EFP.241:461.

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Gene Minnick to Gilbert A. and Mary Ann Natale. August 23, 1983

Gilbert A. and Mary Ann Natale to Mary Ann Natale. Deed Book FHS.132:241. December 8, 1983

Mary Ann Natale to the Greater Germantown Housing Development Corporation. Deed Book: D.1371:209. June 9, 1989

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#### Atlases and Maps

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- Hexamer, E. <u>Hinckley Knitting Mills, Aaron Jones & Sons</u>. Philadelphia: circa 1866.
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- Hexamer, E. Wm. Mills & Son, Dye Works. Philadelphia: 1875.
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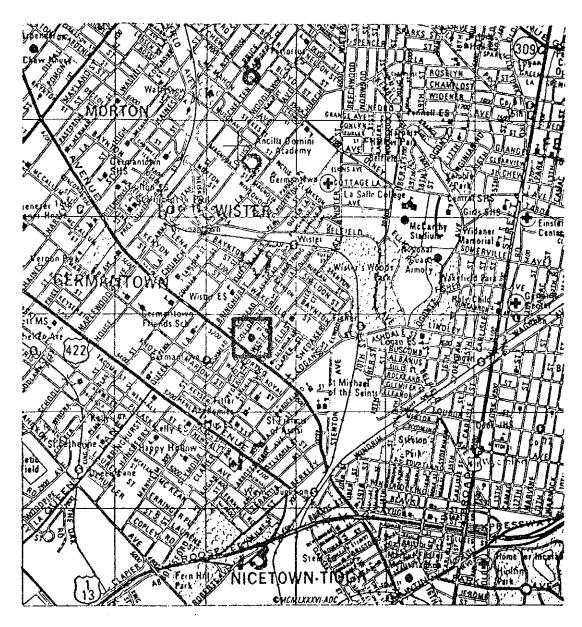




Fig. 1. Locus Map

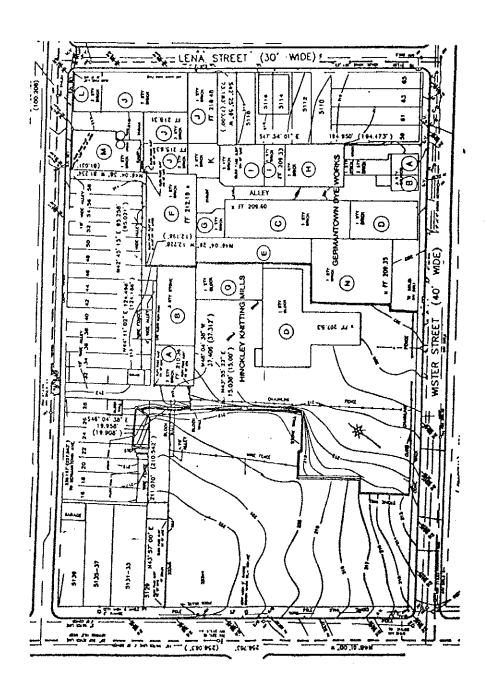


Fig. 2. Location of Hinckley Knitting Mills and Germantown Dye Works (James M. Stewart, Inc. Land Surveyors)

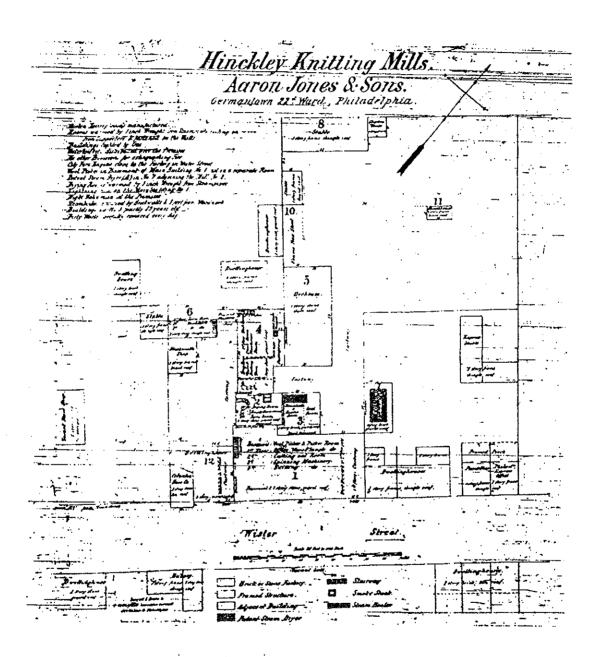


Fig. 3. Hexamer, E. <u>Hinckley Knitting Mills. Aaron Jones & Sons.</u> Philadelphia: circa 1866. Plate 156.

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Fig. 4. Hexamer, E. Wm. Mills & Son. Dye Works. Philadelphia: 1875. Plate 925.

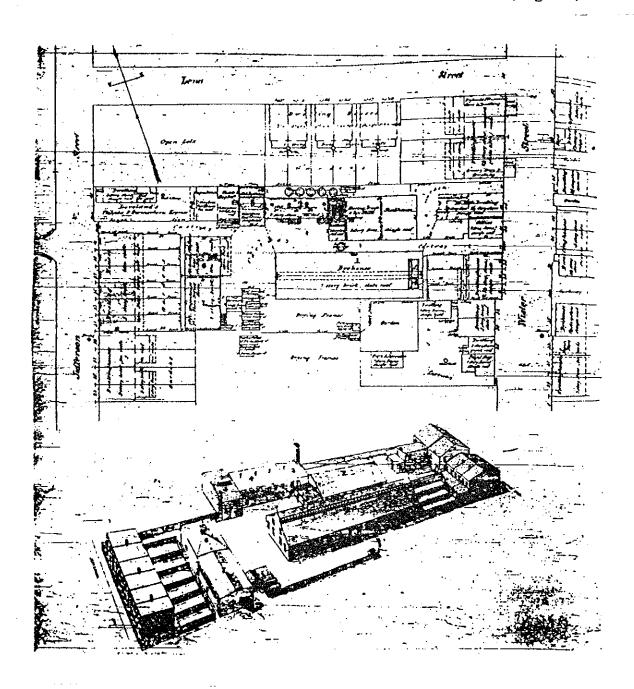


Fig. 5. Hexamer, E. Wm. Mills & Son. Dve Works. Philadelphia: 1875. Plate 926.

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Fig. 6. Hexamer, E. Wm. Mills & Sons'. Dve Works. Philadelphia: 1878. Plate 1240.

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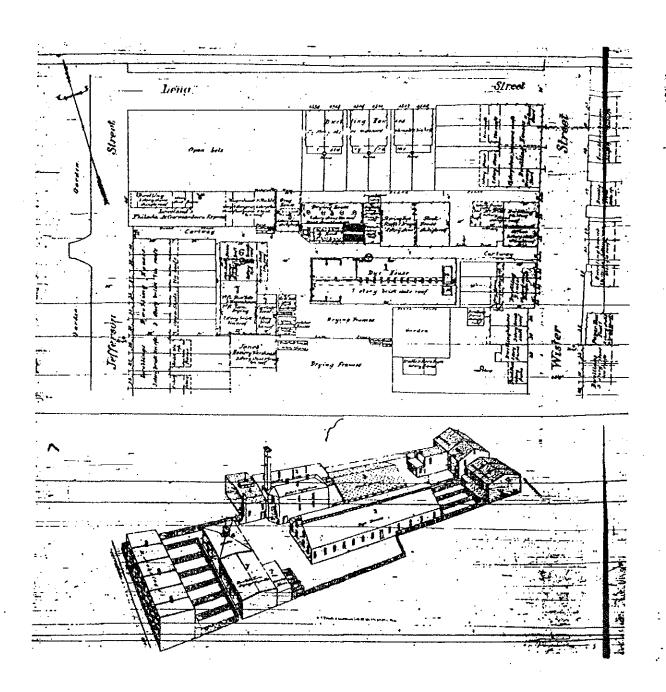


Fig. 7. Hexamer, E. Wm. Mills & Sons', Dye Works. Philadelphia: 1878. Plate 1241.

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### Hinckley Knitting Mills, Aaron Jones' Sons,

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Fig. 8. Hexamer, E. <u>Hinckley Knitting Mills. Aaron Jones' Sons.</u>
Philadelphia: 1879. Plate 1351.

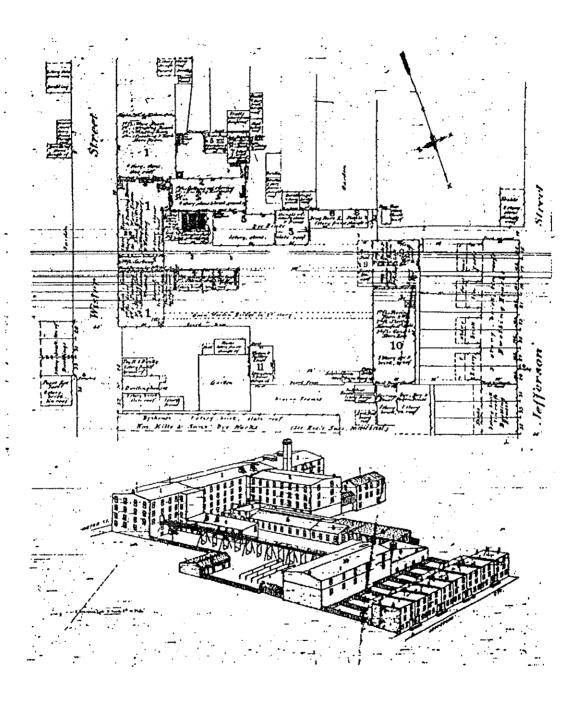


Fig. 9. Hexamer, E. <u>Hinckley Knitting Mills, Aaron Jones' Sons.</u>
Philadelphia: 1879. Plate 1352.

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### Hinckley Knitting Mills, Aaron Jones' Sons,

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Fig. 10. Hexamer, E. <u>Hinckley Knitting Mills. Aaron Jones' Sons.</u> Philadeiphia: 1881. Piate 1558.

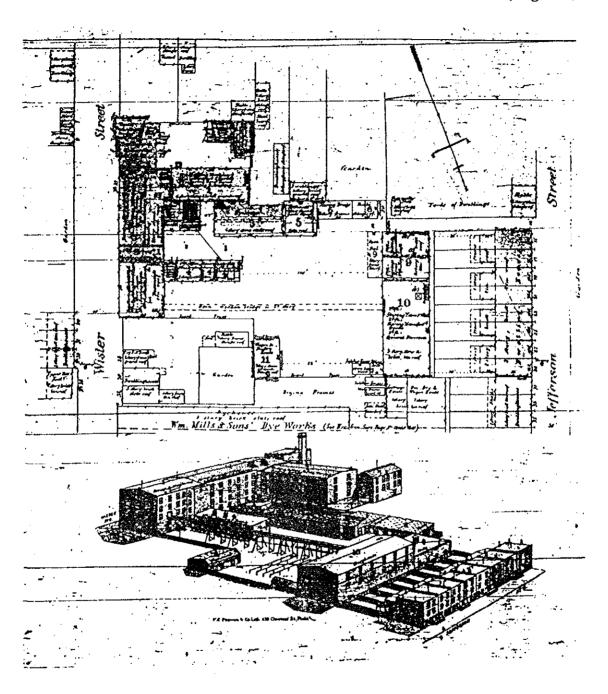


Fig. 11. Hexamer, E. <u>Hinckley Knitting Mills, Aaron Jones' Sons.</u>
Philadelphia: 1881. Plate 1559.

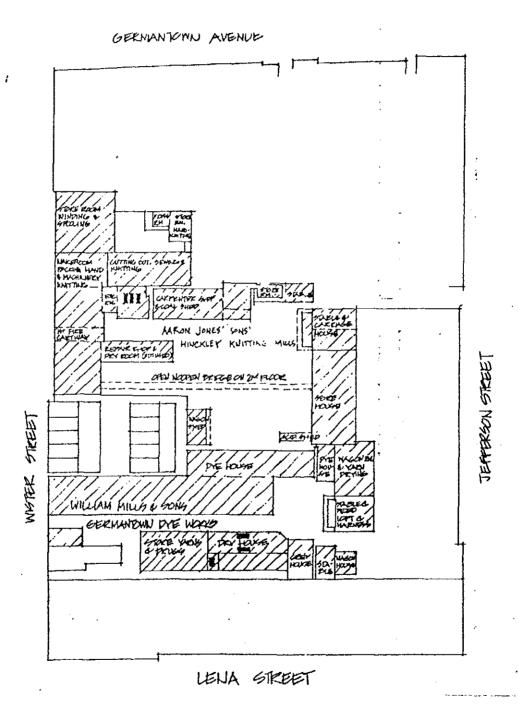


Fig. 12. Hexamer, E. & Son. Atlas of Philadelphia, Ward 22. Philadelphia: 1890. Volume XVI - Plate 305.

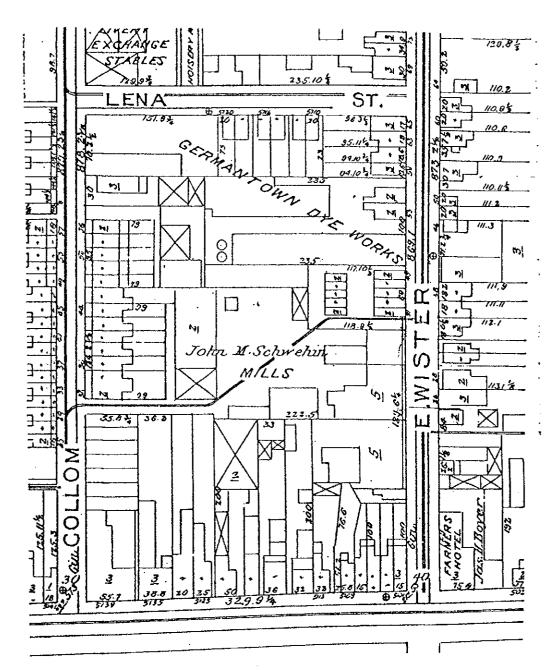


Fig. 13. Smlth, J. L. Atlas of the 22nd and 42nd Wards of the City of Philadelphia. Philadelphia: 1906. Plate 4.

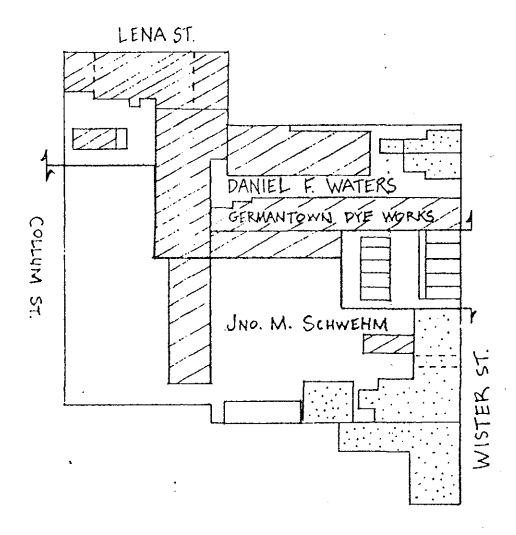


Fig. 14. Bromley. Knlttlng Mills and Germantown Dye Works, 1911. Plate 2.

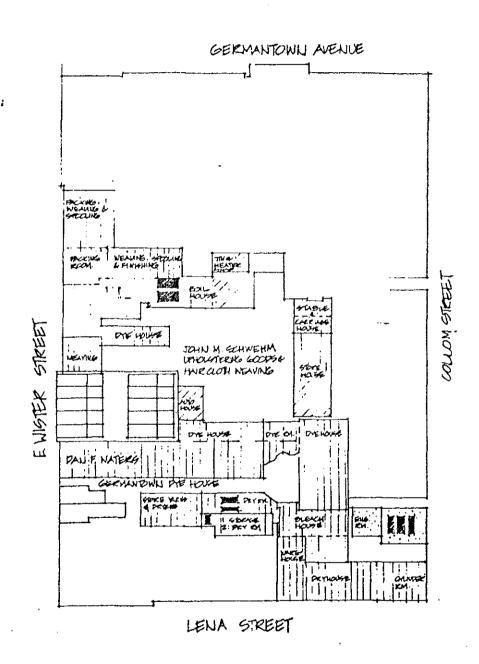


Fig. 15. Hexamer, E. & Son. Germantown Dye Works and Knitting Mill. 1908, revised 1922. Volume XVI. Plate 305.

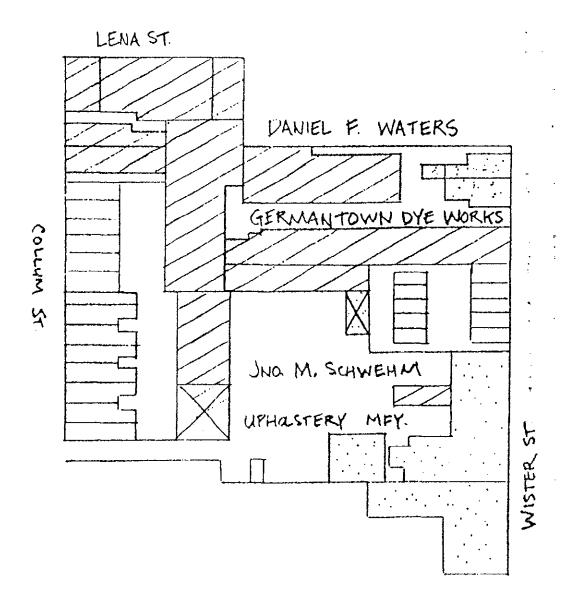


Fig. 16. Bromley. Germantown Dye Works and Knitting Mill, 1923. Plate 2.

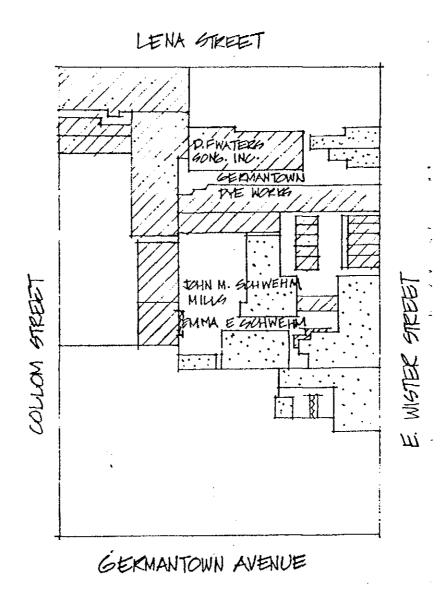


Fig. 17. Franklin Survey Company. Franklin's Property Atlas of 22nd Ward. Philadelphia: 1955. Plate 2.